



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #214 — AUG. 29, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

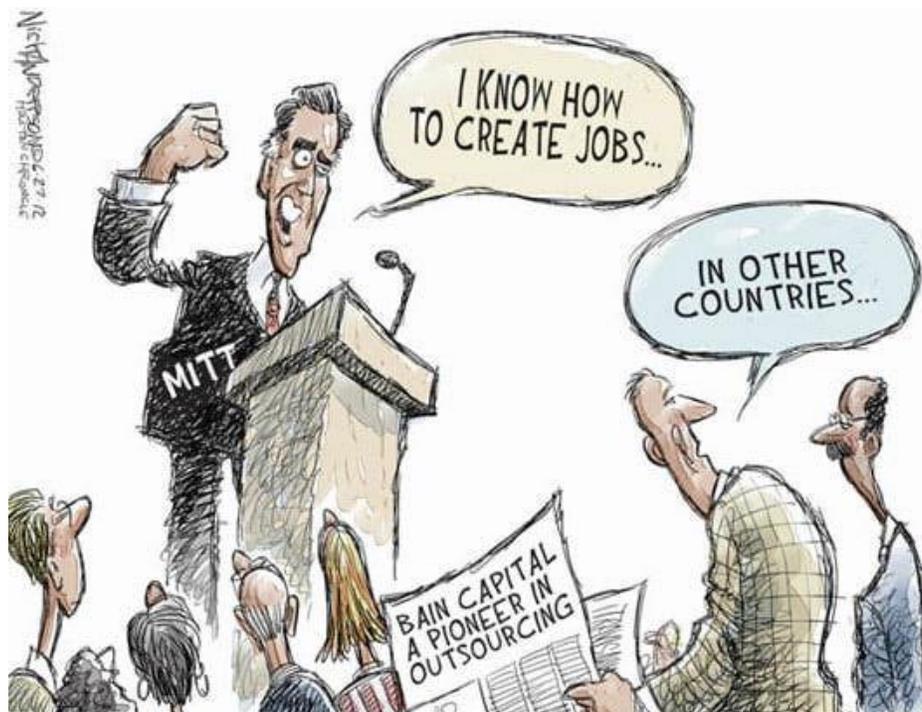
We ALL Built It, Not Just You, Mitt R0mney!

(posted by SteveG, Aug. 29, 2012)

"Prof. Robert S. McElvaine of Millsaps College examined employment data for the 64 years from the beginning of Harry Truman's presidency to the end of George W. Bush's. He found that an average of two million jobs were created per year when a Democrat was president, compared with one million annually when a Republican was president."

"The Secret Weapon: All of Us" by Nicholas D. Kristof, *The New York Times*

Aug. 28, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/opinion/kristof-the-secret-weapon-all-of-us.html?_r=1&smid=fb-share)



The Republican National Convention opened by smacking President Obama with the theme "We Built it."

To pound that message, Republicans turned to a Delaware businesswoman, Sher Valenzuela, who is also a candidate for lieutenant governor. Valenzuela and her husband built an upholstery business that now employs dozens of workers.

Valenzuela presumably was picked to speak so that she could thunder at Obama for disdaining capitalism.

Oops. It turns out that Valenzuela relied not only on her entrepreneurial skills but also on — yes, government help. Media Matters for America, a liberal watchdog group, documented \$2 million in loans from the Small Business Administration for Valenzuela's company, plus \$15 million in government contracts (mostly noncompetitive ones).

In a presentation earlier this year, Valenzuela described government assistance as an entrepreneur's "biggest 'secret weapon.'"

Someone has set up a parody Web site, using the name of Valenzuela's company, First State Manufacturing, to mock the Republican message. The site, FirstStateManufacturing.com, declares, "Thank God government was there for me."

In short, the Republicans are inadvertently underscoring the point that President Obama was expressing in his "you didn't build that" comment in July. Obama noted then that "if you've been successful, you didn't get there on your own." He pointed to public investments in roads and bridges that enable businesses to flourish, and then he inelegantly added, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that."

Fox News erupted in outrage, selectively editing the clip to confirm Republican prejudices that Obama doesn't understand the private sector. This fits into the Republican narrative that business executives are heroic job creators when they aren't held back by regulations and taxes imposed by quasi-socialist Muslims born in Kenya.

Democrats tried to highlight a flaw in that narrative when they released a new ad pointing to Mitt Romney's outsourcing of jobs and telling him, "You didn't build that — you destroyed it."

Yet to me, that Democratic line of attack on Romney as a serial job destroyer feels unfair. Sometimes the way to save a company is to cut labor costs or outsource jobs, and almost nobody wants to ban trade or overseas production even though they can cost jobs.

What is fair is to observe that the Republicans' claim that they are the great job creators is a fiction.

Prof. Robert S. McElvaine of Millsaps College examined employment data for the 64 years from the beginning of Harry Truman's presidency to the end of George W. Bush's. He found that **an average of two million jobs were created per year when a Democrat was president, compared with one million annually when a Republican was president.**

More pointedly, and unfortunately for Romney, business executives have only a mediocre record when transferring their skills to government. In the last great economic mess, this country was led by a Republican who had been stunningly successful in business: Herbert Hoover. Hmm. More recently, President George W. Bush staffed his cabinet with C.E.O.'s who had been stellar in the private sector — and that didn't work out so well, either.

Obama's point about our shared undertaking was made last year, more eloquently, by Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts Democrat running for Senate:

"There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own — nobody!" she said. "You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I want to be clear: You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you all were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for..."

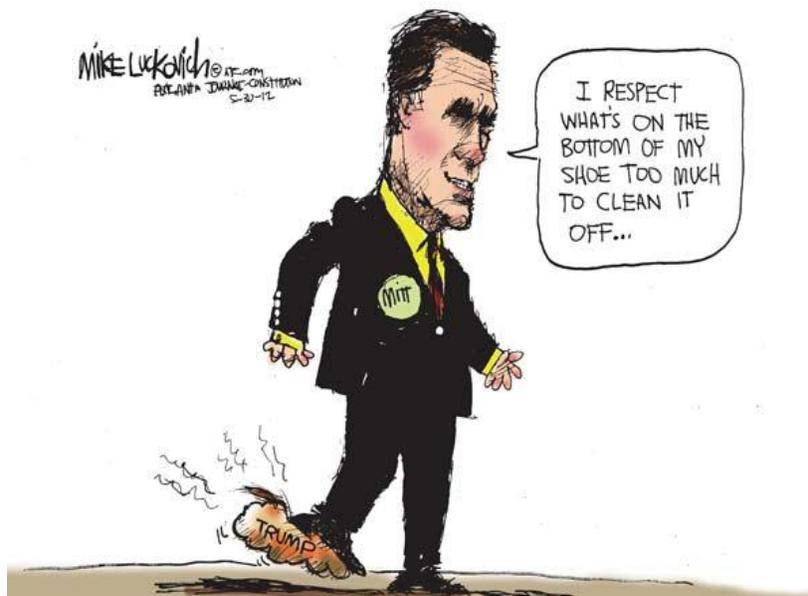
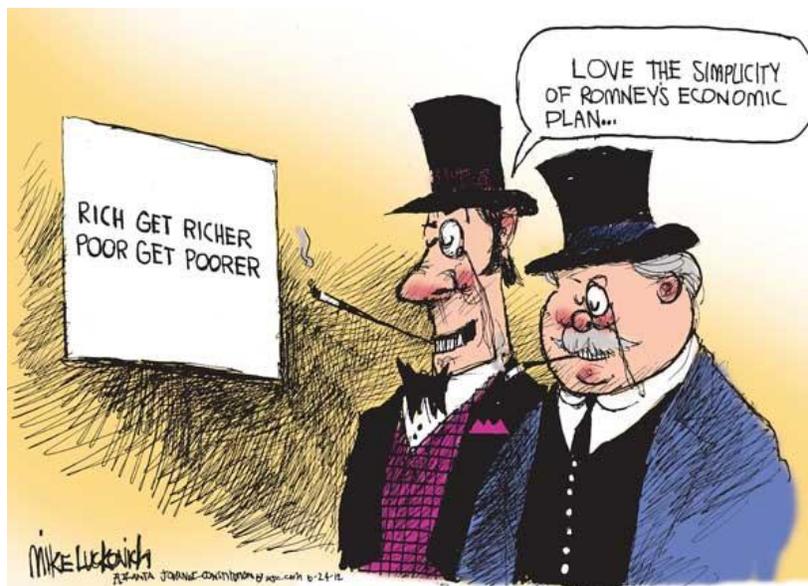
"You built a factory, and it turned into something terrific or a great idea? God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is, you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along."

In short, taxes don't just smother. They can also fuel growth — when they're invested in highways or the Internet, in colleges or early childhood education. They can create opportunities, as they did for Sher Valenzuela.

Or for Romney himself. He built his Bain empire partly because he was smart and hard-working, but also because of a great education and because of tax breaks for debt financing. Tax loopholes helped him build his fortune, and other loopholes gave him the low tax rates to retain it.

If the Republican convention wishes to highlight and explain Romney's success, it should have a moment of silence to honor our infernal tax code.

Who built this country? Entrepreneurs, yes. But so did schoolteachers and railway construction workers. Doctors and truckers. Scientists and soldiers. You didn't build it, Mitt Romney — we all built it.



FotM NEWSLETTER #214 (Aug. 29, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

| <u>DATE-ID</u> | <u>TIME</u> | <u>FROM</u> | <u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| 20120829-00 | | SteveG | We ALL Built It, Not Just You, Mitt R0mney! by SteveG ("The Secret Weapon: All of Us") |
| 20120828-01 | 08:56 | Pam | Re: Delusions (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #213) |
| 20120828-07 | 10:40 | SteveG | Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #213) |
| 20120828-05 | 10:34 | Art | Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #213) |
| 20120828-08 | 10:45 | Pam | Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above) |
| 20120828-09 | 10:51 | Art | Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above) |
| 20120828-02 | 09:04 | SteveG | "The Not-So-Social Gospel" |
| 20120828-03 | 09:18 | Pam | Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above) |
| 20120828-04 | 09:57 | Art | Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above) |
| 20120828-16 | 21:37 | SteveG | "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" |
| 20120828-17 | 23:58 | SteveG | Graphics: Church & State |
| 20120828-12 | 14:27 | Ben | Photos: Last Friday's Lunch at Apple |
| 20120828-06 | 10:39 | Ben | Photo: Monday's Lunch at Apple |
| 20120828-13 | 14:38 | Ben | Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple |
| 20120828-10 | 12:01 | SteveB | "The Mirage of Our Lives" |
| 20120828-11 | 13:21 | SteveB | "Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed" |
| 20120828-14 | 16:47 | Art | Video: Johnny Carson's 1982 "Politician's Lie Detector Test" |
| 20120828-15 | 18:50 | Marci | Fw: Husband of the Year Awards |
| 20120828-18 | 23:59 | SteveB | Photo: Cathedral Interior, Barcelona, Spain |

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|-----------------------------|-------|-----|---|
| 20120828-01 | 08:56 | Pam | Re: Delusions (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #213) |
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SteveG: (re: Romney) I think it is intriguing/interesting that a man who has been running for president for six years (at a minimum), has his staunch party supporters who state that he is a private person and we just need to get to know him. Goodness gracious, one would think he would have let us know him over the past six years, that is, if he had nothing to hide, had the same beliefs then and now, did not flip flop at least once a day, etc.

Help me understand the change in welfare to work program through Obama's executive order. My understanding is that if a state had a different plan (a plan that would get the recipients to work quicker) the state could apply for and receive a waiver to the federal rules – creating smaller federal control and more states rights and getting people from welfare to work quicker. What did I miss? Why would the right wingers not want more state control & quicker movement to work?

Watch for the republican smirk – it will be everywhere this week.

Well put.

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| 20120828-07 | 10:40 | SteveG | Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB) |
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SteveB: I thought of another delusion along the lines of Art's (FotM Newsletter #213):

There is absolutely no relation, in any way shape or form, between the present economy and eight years of Bush administration and, for the most part, 40 or 50 years of Republican policy dominance. The only factor affecting everything is President Obama. How could a black man understand something as complicated as capitalism? Or even a half-black man...

Or a half-white man...

20120828-05 10:34 Art Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB)

Ugly but true. That may be one of the most amazing things to me, is the Republican position that somehow this economy is all President Obama's fault and even more amazing, that people are buying it.

20120828-08 10:45 Pam Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above)

I cannot fathom how the Obama family endure everything they have to deal with. Any politician's family really. What a snake pit politics is. I truly believe Obama has done and is doing the best he can, given the circumstances he inherited. How does he stand the pressure, I wonder? I know the debates will make me so nervous, I'm not sure I can watch them. It's way worse than the Super Bowl. But I'm anxious to see how Obama does. I read an article about how rehearsed Romney will be and what a good debater he is (\$10,000 bet, anyone?) and how Obama has other things on his mind and isn't as good on his feet as he is at giving set speeches. Still, I'm putting my money on Obama--with my fingers crossed. Maybe the country will get lucky and Romney will produce another of his memorable gaffes.

20120828-09 10:51 Art Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)

It was the debates with McCain that first put me in his camp. He came across as a very smart, very concerned guy. I liked taht, and you can imagine how a Vietnam veteran ex military person like me wanted to favor McCain.

20120828-02 09:04 SteveG "The Not-So-Social Gospel"

What if Jesus had been a Republican?

"The Not-So-Social Gospel" by Michael Lerner, Tikkun/Cath News

Aug. 24, 2012, (<http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2012/08/24/the-not-so-social-gospel/>)

This was sent to Tikkun on email from Cath News and a column called "The Not-So-Social-Gospel." It is a powerful reminder both of how far sections of the Christian world have strayed from the teachings of Jesus, and also a reminder of the tens of millions of Catholics who are deeply dedicated to social justice, peace, generosity and love (even though unfortunately they are stuck in a church whose leadership is more interested in demonizing gays and abortions and attacking American Nuns who take Jesus' teachings seriously than in carrying on the progressive elements in Jesus' gospel). It saddens us at Tikkun to see how twisted that Church leadership has become, just as we have been saddened by how twisted the Jewish leadership has become to give blind support to the oppressive policies of Israel toward Palestinians, and reminds us to once again invite all Christians who do feel connected to the social justice, peace and love oriented Jesus to join our INTERFAITH Network of Spiritual Progressives at www.spiritualprogressives.org so that we can work together to amplify these voices and provide comfort and support to those who are being "dissed" in their own religious communities for taking seriously the highest teachings of their God.

The Lazy Paralytic

1. When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at his home. 2. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5. When Jesus saw this he grew angry, "Why did you wreck my roof? Do you have any idea how much that cost to install? Do you know how many tables and chairs I

had to make in my carpentry shop to pay for that roof? The reeds alone cost five talents. I had them carted in from Bethany." 6. The disciples had never seen Jesus so angry about his possessions. He continued, "This house is my life. And the roof is the best part." The disciples fell silent. 7. "It's bad enough that you trash my private property, now you want me to heal you?" said Jesus, "And did you not see the stone walls around this house?" "Yes," said the man's friends. "Are these not the stone walls common to the towns and villages of Galilee?" 8. "No," Jesus answered. "This is a gated community. How did you get in?" The man's friends grew silent. 9. Then Jesus turned and said to the paralytic, "Besides, can't you take care of your own health problems? I'm sure that your family can care for you, or maybe the synagogue can help out." 10. "No, Lord," answered the man's friends. "There is no one. His injuries are too severe. To whom else can we go?" 11. "Well, not me," said Jesus. "What would happen if I provided access to free health care for everyone? That would mean that people would not only get lazy and entitled, but they would take advantage of the system. 12. Besides, look at me: I'm healthy. And you know why? Because I worked hard for my money, and took care of myself." The paralyzed man then grew sad and he addressed Jesus. "But I did work, Lord," said the paralytic. "Until an accident rendered me paralyzed." "Yes," said the man's friends. "He worked very hard." 13. "Well," said Jesus, "That's just part of life, isn't it?" "Then what am I to do, Lord?" said the paralytic. "I don't know. Why don't you sell your mat?" 14. All in the crowd then grew sad. "Actually, you know what you can do?" said Jesus. "You can reimburse me for my roof. Or I'll sue you." And all were amazed. 15. "We have never seen anything like this," said the crowd.

The Very Poorly Prepared Crowd

1. The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve apostles came to Jesus and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." 2 But Jesus said to them, "Why not give them something to eat?" They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." 3 For there were about five thousand men. And Jesus said to his disciples, "You know what? You're right. Don't waste your time and shekels. It would be positively immoral for you to spend any of your hard-earned money for these people. They knew full well that they were coming to a deserted place, and should have relied on themselves and brought more food. As far as I'm concerned, it's every five thousand men for themselves." 4. The disciples were astonished by this teaching. "But Lord," said Thomas. "The crowd will surely go hungry." Jesus was amazed at his hard-headedness. "That's not my problem, Thomas. Better that their stomachs are empty than they become overly dependent on someone in authority to provide loaves and fishes for them on a regular basis. Where will it end? Will I have to feed them everyday?" "No, Lord," said Thomas, "Just today. When they are without food. After they have eaten their fill, they will be healthy, and so better able to listen to your word and learn from you." Jesus was grieved at Thomas's answer. Jesus answered, "It is written: There's no such thing as a free lunch." So taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and took one loaf and one fish for himself, and gave the rest to the twelve, based on their previously agreed-upon contractual per diem. But he distributed none to the crowd, because they needed to be taught a lesson. So Jesus ate and he was satisfied. The disciples somewhat less so. "Delicious," said Jesus. What was left over was gathered up and saved for Jesus, should he grow hungry in a few hours. The very poorly prepared crowd soon dispersed.

The Rich and Therefore Blessed Young Man

1. As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 2. And Jesus said to him, "What have you done so far?" 3. And he said to Him, "Well I was born into a wealthy family, got into a good school in Galilee because my parents donated a few thousand talents for a building with a nice reed roof, and now I have a high-paying job in the Roman treasury managing risk." 4. Looking at him, Jesus felt an admiration for him, and said to him, "Blessed are you! For you are not far from being independently wealthy." And the man was happy. Then Jesus said, "But there is one thing you lack: A bigger house in a gated community in Tiberias. Buy that and you will have a treasure indeed. And make sure you get a stone countertop for the kitchen. Those are really nice." The disciples were amazed. 5. Peter asked him, "Lord, shouldn't he sell all his possessions and give it to the poor?" Jesus grew angry. "Get behind me, Satan! He has earned it!" Peter protested: "Lord," he said, "Did this man not have an unjust advantage? What about those who are not born into wealthy families, or who do not have the benefit of a good education, or who, despite all their toil, live in the poorer areas of Galilee, like Nazareth, your own home town?" 6. "Well," said Jesus, "first of all, that's why I left Nazareth. There were too many poor people always asking me for charity. They were as numerous as the stars in the sky, and they annoyed me. Second, once people start spending again, like this rich young man,

the Galilean economy will inevitably rebound, and eventually some of it will trickle down to the poor. Blessed are the patient! But giving the money away, especially if he can't write it off, is a big fat waste." The disciples' amazement knew no bounds. "But Lord," they said, "what about the passages in both the Law and the Prophets that tell us to care for widows and orphans, for the poor, for the sick, for the refugee? What about the many passages in the Scriptures about justice?" 7. "Those are just metaphors," said Jesus. "Don't take everything so literally."

[20120828-03](#) 09:18 Pam Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)

I just wish some Republicans would read this.

[20120828-04](#) 09:57 Art Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)

Good one!

[20120828-16](#) 21:37 SteveG "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations"

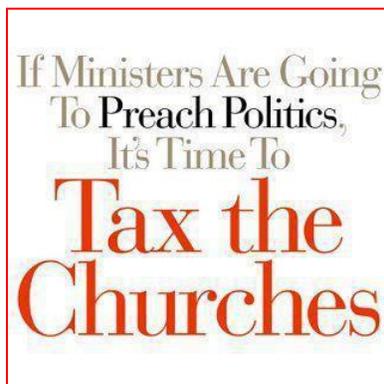
Got to watch those sneaky church people...

"Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" by AP/NBC/KNDO

Aug. 28, 2012, (http://www.nbcnews.com/id/48820568/ns/local_news-yakima_wa/)

(OLYMPIA, WA) The state's campaign finance watchdog says the state's Catholic churches can't collect donations from parishioners for the campaign seeking to overturn the state's gay marriage law. Last week, Yakima Bishop Joseph Tyson sent a letter to pastors in 41 parishes of the Yakima Diocese asking them to announce a special collection that would go to Preserve Marriage Washington, which is fighting the same-sex marriage law that was passed earlier this year. The diocese's chief of staff, Monsignor Robert Siler, said Tuesday that the expected collection date was Sept. 8-9. But Lori Anderson, a spokeswoman for the state's Public Disclosure Commission, says no organization can be an intermediary for a contribution. She says the church can hand out envelopes, but either a member of Preserve Washington has to be on hand to collect them or parishioners must send them in individually.

[20120828-17](#) 23:58 SteveG Graphics: Church & State



If Ministers Are Going
To Preach Politics,
It's Time To
**Tax the
Churches**

Did you know?

The original **Constitution** of the United States that was ratified in **1789** had only **one reference to religion**: [Article 6] **No religious Test shall ever be required** as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

The *de facto* **motto** of the United States, adopted as part of the Great Seal of the U.S. by an Act of Congress in 1782, was **E. Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One)**. Congress **changed it 174 years later (1956)** to "In God We Trust."

The original **'Pledge of Allegiance'** was written in **1892** by Baptist Minister Francis Bellamy who **DID NOT INCLUDE** the words **"Under God."** Those were added by Congress 62 years later (1954).

The **U.S. didn't issue Paper Currency until 1861**, and **'In God We Trust' didn't appear on it for 96 years (1957)**.

Just after the **Red Scare in the 1950's**, **CONGRESS CHANGED** the **Pledge of Allegiance** and our **Nation's Motto** over the **FEAR of COMMUNISM**.

In a time **when fear is traded like a commodity**, and the word **SOCIALISM** is being used to **create the same fear as** the old word **COMMUNISM**, let's **REMEMBER** that our country was **NOT founded on fear**. **NO, OUR NATION** was **founded out of HOPE** for a better world where **all people were EQUAL** – that we were **ONE from MANY**.

Let's not let fear change our nation's great tradition & direction again.

20120828-12 14:27 Ben Photos: Last Friday's Lunch at Apple

Last Friday, Chef Ray Trono and Chef Anna Quattrochi, and Ray's son Thomas, joined me and an AWL (Absent With Leave) Susette for lunch at Caffe Macs. Although there is a Beer Bash scheduled today, it's all Food Trucks, so cafeteria staff are not involved in preparations for the 'Bash. That means that the menu at Caffe Macs suffered no evil impact of the afternoon Beer Bash.

Today, Chef Alejandro unleashed an awesome seared tuna plate that sated even my fresh fish lust. I apologize for not having had the time to complete this message last week; it's the beginning of the academic year, and that always has a crushing effect on my department.

The lunch plate was an awesomely chunky slab of very fine yellowfin tuna, with pickled carrot slices and a very tasty mild yellow curry sauce:

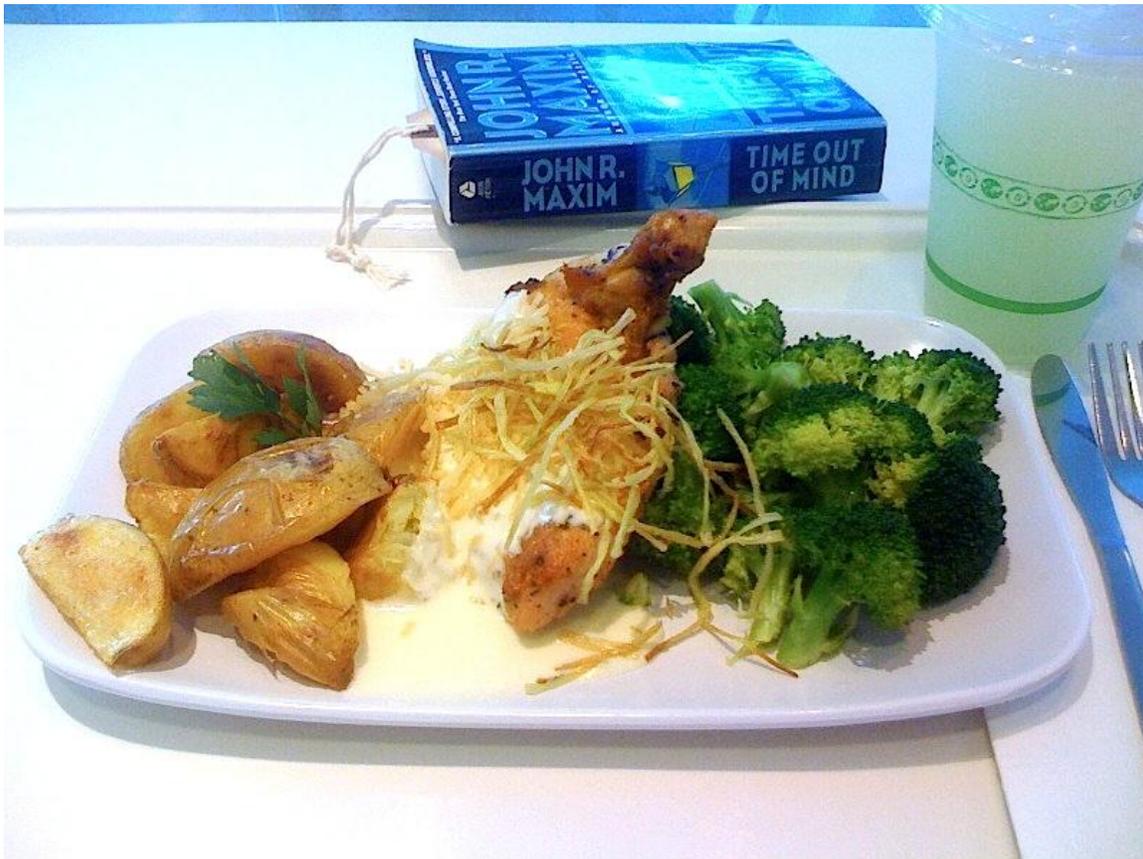


Seared Aji Tuna with Curry Sauce



Tuna Sashimi Surprise!

I make jokes about chickening out, or chickening up, but I really do like chicken. Like so many foods (all foods!) preparation matters, and yesterday, for Chefs Patricia and Bladimir, it really paid off: she brined the 'airline' portions - nicely trimmed breast quarters with the messy top wing joints removed - before searing and whatever herb treatment was applied. Tarragon, to be sure, in tasteful, tasty moderation; it seemed gently suffused throughout my serving. The deep golden skin was seared to thin pliability, bordering on crisp, adding a modest layer of concentrated flavor to the dish. A lush Asiago-leek sauce complemented and decorated the dish; it was so yummy that I was unable to avert myself from sopping up as much as I could with tender chicken morsels. A nicely blanched heap of ready-to-munch broccoli crowns, and a generous heap of Yukon Gold potatoes rounded out a lovely plate as tasty as anyone, even a hardened fish junkie like me, might wish:



Seared Tarragon Chicken with Asiago-Leek Sauce

That's Corn-onna-Cob. Weirdly, something I had last night, too, for the third time in all this year. I guess it's Corn Harvest season somewhere!

Today's Lovely Lunch was, as you can see, a generous serving of fresh Gulf shrimp, marinated with lime, chilis, and spices, then sauteed with bell peppers and onions. Very Latin, and quite delicious; Chef Patricia prepared a lovely dish including sofrito rice that was so tasty I ate it all; she also garnished the corn with Cojita cheese, a combination I'd not had before today. A lovely plate, and a lovely lunch, of which I left but a few grains of rice that eluded my chopsticks. (Yes, I eat the tails...)



Lime-Chili Shrimp with Corn on a Cob

20120828-10 12:01 SteveB "The Mirage of Our Lives"

"The Mirage of Our Lives" by Chris Hedges, TruthDig/NationofChange

Aug. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/mirage-our-lives-1346160468>)

Dave Eggers' gem of a book, *A Hologram for the King*, is a parable about the decadence, fragility and heartlessness of late, decayed corporate capitalism. It is about the small, largely colorless men and women who serve as managers in our suicidal outsourcing of manufacturing jobs and the methodical breaking of labor unions. It is about the lie of globalization, a lie that impoverishes us all to increase corporate profits.

A Hologram for the King tells the story of Alan, a lackluster 54-year-old consultant who is desperately trying to snag one final big contract in Saudi Arabia for Reliant, a corporation that is "the largest I.T. supplier in the world," to save himself from financial ruin. Alan has come to realize that managers like him who made outsourcing possible will be discarded as human refuse now that the process is complete, left to wander like ghosts—or holograms—among the ruins. And Eggers' novel is a subtle, deft and poignant look at the horrendous toll this corporate process takes on self-esteem, on family, on health, on community and finally on the nation itself. It does so, like parables from Greek tragedy or George Orwell, by finding the perfect story to make a point that is universal.

Eggers, who showcased his talent as a writer of nonfiction in "Zeitoun" about Hurricane Katrina, combines fiction and reporting to create a small masterpiece. The book works because of its authenticity, its close attention to detail and Eggers' respect for fact. I spent many months as a correspondent in Saudi Arabia where the novel is set. Eggers captures in tight, bullet-like prose the utter decadence, hypocrisy and corruption of the kingdom, as well as its bleak landscape, suffocating heat and soulless glass and concrete office buildings. He is keenly aware that the outward religiosity and piety mask a moral and physical rot that fits seamlessly into the world of globalized capitalism.

Eggers conjures up the bizarre incongruities of Saudi Arabia from his image of a Saudi soldier in a beach chair cooling his bare feet in an inflatable pool next to a Humvee, to a wild embassy party where drunken expatriates in their underwear dive into the swimming pool for pills. At one point Alan mistakenly stumbles onto an unfinished floor of a luxury condo where 25 foreign laborers from Malaysia, Pakistan and the Philippines, crammed together as if on a slave ship, are fighting over a discarded cellphone. This scene captures the outward illusion of prosperity of global capitalism and the internal and brutal oppression of workers who make the illusion possible.

"Alan opened the fire door and a roar of echoes flooded through. He was in a large raw space full of men, some in their underclothes, some in red jumpsuits, all yelling. It looked like pictures he'd seen of prison gyms converted to dormitories. There were fifty bunks, cloths hanging on lines between them. The beds were empty, though—all the men were gathered in the center of the room, barking, pushing. Alan had interrupted some kind of fight."

Alan's attempt to intervene backfires. The workers yell in his face. He is pushed. He turns and runs.

Alan's professional life follows the trajectory of American manufacturing. He was an executive with Schwinn when the company broke the union, tried to set up a plant with nonunionized workers in Mississippi, which failed, and then shipped its production to China. Alan then moved his professional career "from Schwinn to Huffy to Frontier Manufacturing Partners to Alan Clay Consulting to sitting at home watching DVDs of the Red Sox winning the Series in '04 and '07."

Alan, like Willy Loman, has the reservoir of stock salesman jokes, the upbeat optimism that studiously ignores reality, and his uniform: khakis and crisp white shirts. He dropped out of college to sell Fuller Brush products. He applies what he learns from an older, experienced Fuller Brush salesman named Trivole to life. Trivole says that there are four basic appeals to people: Money. Romance. Self-Preservation. Recognition. Alan sells bikes the same way he sold Fuller Brush products. "All the principles applied: the bikes were practical (Money); they were beautiful, glittering things (Romance); they were safe and durable (Self-Preservation); and they were status symbols for any family (Recognition)."

Alan marries a firebrand activist, Ruby, whose personal bitterness and cruelty, as well as passion for social justice, expose his timidity, blandness and intellectual limitations. But Alan, who lacks much of a conscience as well as a sense of direction, is redeemed in Eggers' eyes by his love for his only daughter who, if the deal falls through, which it does, will not be able to go back to "a very good and expensive college." It is Alan's fragility, including his concerns about a cyst on his neck that he lances open with a serrated dinner knife, which remind us that he is human, that like most of us he is at once culpable and a victim. Alan has been rendered, in this new globalized world, impotent. He is no longer capable of sex. He has two disastrous encounters with women during his trip, moments of acute embarrassment and shame. At night he often sits alone in his hotel room on the 10th floor of the Hilton in Jeddah getting drunk on homemade grain alcohol and composing letters he will never send to his daughter Kit.

Alan, Eggers writes, did well in the old America, the one that made things and sold them, the one that paid its workers fair wages with pensions and benefits, the one that made possible a middle class. But that America is gone, destroyed when "he and others decided to have other people, ten thousand miles away, build the things they sold." And Alan must confront in the novel the fact that he was deeply complicit in his own demise, that he "helped scout a new, non-union location for Schwinn, had met with suppliers in China and Taiwan, had contributed not insignificantly ... to all that undid Schwinn and the 1,200 workers employed there."

His "decisions were shortsighted, foolish or expedient," he admits. "He and his peers did not know they were making decisions that would leave them, like Alan, as he now was—virtually broke, nearly unemployed, the proprietor of a one-man consulting firm run out of his home office."

Alan's father Ron is a World War II vet who still has shrapnel in his body and lives on a farm in New Hampshire. Ron, whose crude vitality and generous union pension intimidate his son, barks at Alan over the phone:

"Every day, Alan, all over Asia, hundreds of container ships are leaving their ports, full of every kind of consumer good. Talk about three-dimensional, Alan. These are actual things. They're making things over there, and we're

making websites and holograms, while sitting in chairs made in China, working on computers made in China, driving over bridges made in China. Does this sound sustainable to you, Alan?"

The hologram becomes the perfect metaphor for the insubstantial nature of the American economy. None of it is real. It is a mirage. It is held up by credit, by debt, by the printing of endless amounts of new money and by vast schemes of financial speculation and casino capitalism that evaporate as swiftly as a hologram. The development project Alan and his team are bidding on is itself a mirage. He and his team of three snotty young careerists, who look at Alan with scorn and pity, have cooked up a holographic teleconferencing system where a sales representative in London will appear before the Saudi king as a hologram in a tent in the barren wastelands of a planned city with only three buildings, including a two-story welcome center known as King Abdulla Economic City. The holographic sales representative will walk on the stage and speak in Arabic and English and then disappear for the king. And they are sure that this bit of magic will save them.

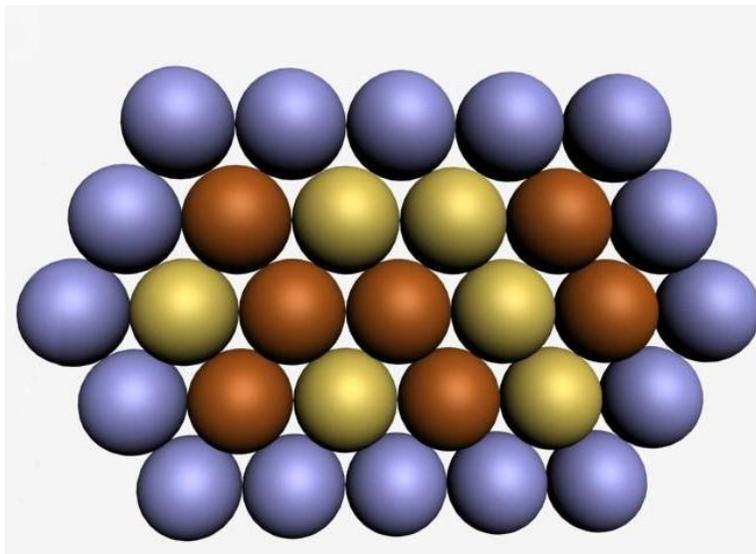
Alan and his co-workers wait 11 days for the king. "One Man's Vision, One Nation's Hope," the billboard advertising the development reads. The king, when he does arrive, watches the hologram impassively and promptly gives the contract to a Chinese firm. And the bubble for Alan, as it has for most of us, bursts. He too becomes a hologram.

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|--------|---|
| 20120828-11 | 13:21 | SteveB | "Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed" |
|-------------|-------|--------|---|

I guess we've lost our lead in science and technology to Singapore, where taxes are used to benefit the people...

"Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed" by ScienceDaily

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/08/120824103022.htm>)



An illustration of the new IBN nanocomposite material which is composed of gold-copper alloy atoms in the core and platinum atoms at the outer layer. (Credit: Image courtesy of Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), Singapore)

Using a mixture of gold, copper and platinum nanoparticles, IBN researchers have developed a more powerful and longer lasting fuel cell material. This breakthrough was published recently in the journal, *Energy and Environmental Science*.

Fuel cells are a promising technology for use as a source of electricity to power electronic devices, vehicles, military aircraft and equipment. A fuel cell converts the chemical energy from hydrogen (fuel) into electricity through a chemical reaction with oxygen. A fuel cell can produce electricity continuously as long as there is a fuel supply.

Current commercially available fuel cells use platinum nanoparticles as the catalyst to speed up the chemical reaction because platinum is the only metal that can resist the highly acidic conditions inside such a cell. However, the widespread use of fuel cells has been impeded by the high cost of platinum and its low stability.

To overcome this limitation, a team of researchers led by IBN Executive Director Professor Jackie Y. Ying has discovered that by replacing the central part of the catalyst with gold and copper alloy and leaving just the outer layer in platinum, the new hybrid material can provide 5 times higher activity and much greater stability than the commercial platinum catalyst. With further optimization, it would be possible to further increase the material's catalytic properties.

IBN's new nanocomposite material can produce at least 0.571 amperes of electric current per milligram of platinum, compared to 0.109 amperes per milligram of platinum for commercial platinum catalysts. This is also the first time that a catalyst has been shown to enhance both the stability and activity for the fuel cell reaction with a significantly reduced platinum content.

To make this catalyst more active than the commercial platinum catalyst, the researchers have designed the core of the nanocrystalline material to be a gold-copper alloy, which has slightly smaller lattice spacing than the platinum coating on the nanocrystal's surface. This creates a compressive strain on the surface platinum atoms, making the platinum more active in the rate-limiting step of oxygen reduction reaction for the fuel cell. Replacing the core of the nanoparticle with the less expensive gold-copper alloy cuts down the usage of platinum, a highly expensive noble metal.

Professor Ying said, "A key research focus at IBN is to develop green energy technologies that can lead to greater efficiency and environmental sustainability. More active and less costly than conventional platinum catalysts, our new nanocomposite system has enabled us to significantly advance fuel cell development and make the technology more practical for industrial applications."

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|--|
| 20120828-14 | 16:47 | Art | Video: Johnny Carson's 1982 "Politician's Lie Detector Test" |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|--|

This is pretty good. Wouldn't it be nice to see all politicians but especially R&R, hooked up to this. Suspect those two alone would burn out the machine.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbWI9xIGba4>

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Husband of the Year Awards:



The honorable mention goes to the United Kingdom.



Followed closely by the United States of America.



And then Poland.



3rd Place must go to Greece.



It was very, very close but the runner up prize was awarded to Serbia.



But the winner of the "Husband/Partner of the Year" is Ireland!
Ya gotta love the Irish. The Irish are true romantics. Look, he's even holding her hand.

Woman has Man in it.
Mrs. has Mr. in it.
Female has Male in it.
She has He in it.
Madam has Adam in it.

Okay, Okay, it all makes sense now. I never looked at it this way before.

Ever notice how all of women's problems start with MEN?

MENTal illness!
MENstrual cramps!
MENTal breakdown!
MENopause!
GUYnecologist!

AND

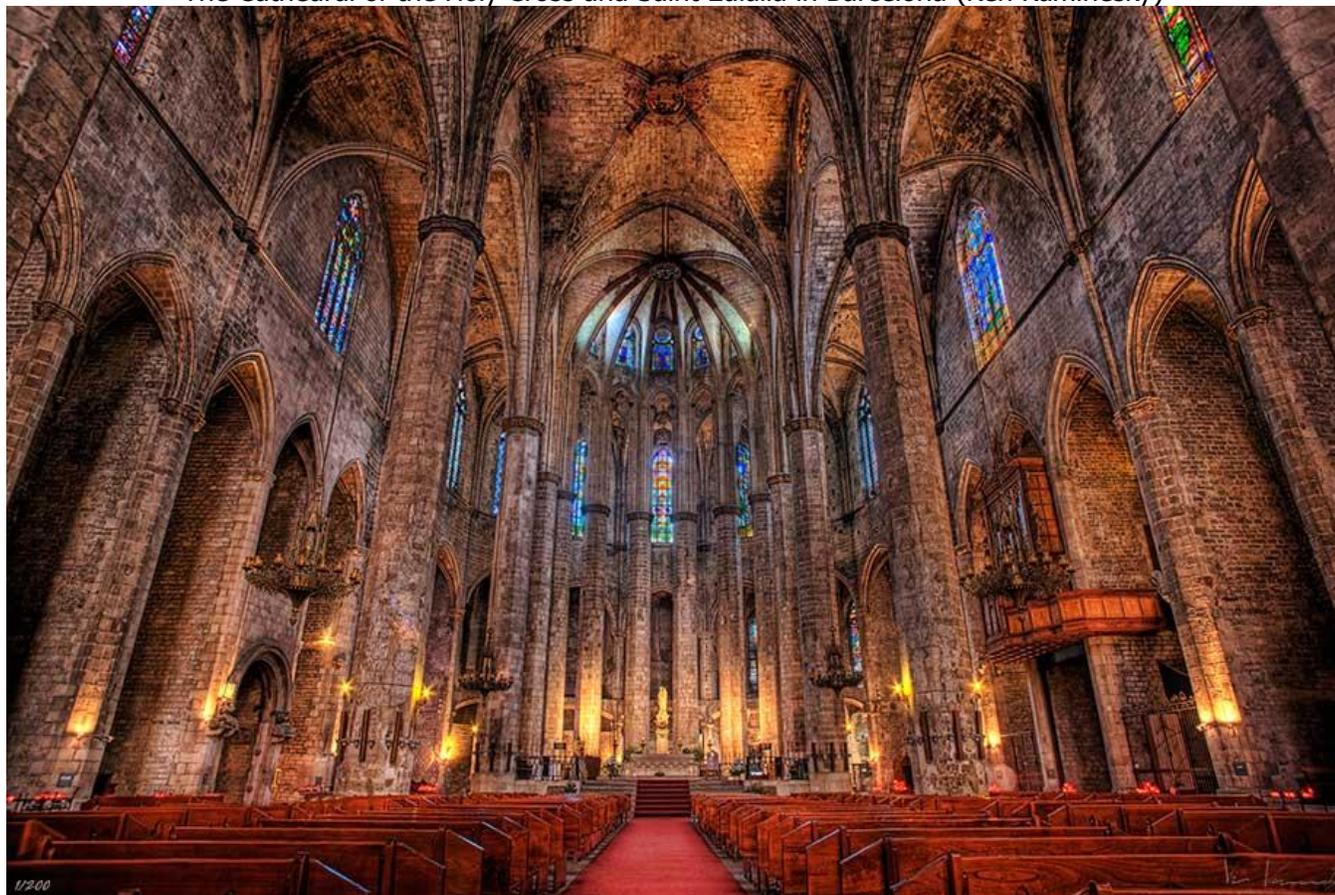
When we have REAL trouble, it's a. HISterectomy!

Remember: You don't stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing.

20120828-18 23:59 SteveB Photo: Cathedral Interior, Barcelona, Spain

<http://blog.kenkaminesky.com/available-print-gallery/>

The Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia in Barcelona (Ken Kaminesky)



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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